



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 10
1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900
Seattle, Washington 98101-3140

July 7, 2008

Reply To
Attn Of: ETPA-088

Ref: 05-023-AFS

Ms. Cornie Hudson, Project Team Leader
St. Joe Ranger District
222 7th Street, Suite 1
St. Marie, ID 83861

Dear Ms. Hudson:

The EPA has reviewed the final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) for the **Bussel 484 Project** on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest in Idaho in accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

The Idaho Panhandle National Forest (the Forest) is proposing to manage vegetative resources, provide wood products, work toward full support of designated beneficial uses in the Bussel Creek Watershed, and manage access to provide for multiple uses. The selected alternative (Alternative B Modified) would treat approximately 2,137 acres within the 14,646 acre project area. Silvicultural prescriptions would include 1,486 acres of commercial thins, 521 acres of group shelterwood cuts, 53 acres of seedtree cuts, and 78 acres of clearcuts with reserves. Road activity would include construction of 5.1 miles of system road, 0.5 miles of temporary road, and 6.7 miles of road reconstruction. An additional 0.2 miles of road would be constructed on Potlatch Corporation lands to facilitate timber harvest on National Forest System (NFS) lands. Access management activities would include providing ATV access to the entire Norton Creek Railroad Grade.

In our April 14, 2008 letter on the draft EIS, we sought additional information and/or clarification on a limited number of issues, including the need for new road construction in units 233 and 248; access management on the Bussel Creek Trail; the impacts to resources along the Norton Creek and Lines Creek trails under the proposed alternative; and the proposed time line for riparian plantings (10-15 years). We appreciate the efforts you and your staff have taken to address these questions. We also appreciate the modifications to alternative B, which will stand to reduce the overall amount of road construction (thereby benefitting water quality), and preserve the historic character of road 3570A. Thank you for the opportunity to review this final EIS. If you have questions or comments, please contact Teresa Kubo (503) 326-2859 or myself at (206) 553-1601.

Sincerely,

/s/

Christine Reichgott, Manager
NEPA Review Unit